Question 17: Inclusiveness

Task: Address inclusive excellence as a unit goal.

IAFS is fortunate to teach a curriculum that lends itself to intercultural understanding, exposure to diverse perspectives, and community engagement. From an academic perspective, the major continues to require intensive study of both a different region of the world (Africa/Middle East, Asia, Europe/Eurasia, or Latin America) and a specific foreign language (third-year proficiency) in addition to the global coverage provided in the introductory course. By fulfilling the major’s functional areas, students receive exposure to a variety of disciplinary perspectives on Western and non-Western cultures and regularly encounter issues not confined to borders such as racism, inequality, and exploitation.

Beginning in 2015, the program initiated the Off-Campus Experience component of the major to increase student interaction with the community and support experiential learning as a means to further broaden students’ perspectives outside the classroom. This 3-credit requirement can be fulfilled through qualified internships, a service-learning course, or study abroad. For the service-learning route, students choose from EDUC 4125: Secondary World Language Methods, LEAD 4000: Leadership in Context and Emerging Challenges, or IAFS’s own IAFS 3000: Sustainability and Democracy. The program recently began offering Scholarship in Experiential Education (SEED) funds of up to $500 to help students defray costs associated with the Off-Campus Experience requirement. IAFS helps make the study abroad experience more accessible through its Global Grants scholarship funded by alumni and donors, though the program is seeking to increase its funding of the scholarship to continue to address the potential financial barriers to study abroad for IAFS majors.

In Spring 2016, IAFS participated in the campus-wide conversation on Inclusive Excellence. Through a series of meetings and surveys with faculty, staff, and students, the program sought to unpack its relationship with diversity and excellence (see Appendix 5: Inclusive Excellence). The program committed to a culture of shared accountability in which everyone from the director to first-semester students treat each other with dignity and respect. The program also recognized that its academic connection to issues of inclusiveness and diversity, while exciting, was not sufficient. The faculty surveyed believe that IAFS “has a unique responsibility to speak back to the zeitgeist of xenophobia in a national context, and not only in the United States but in other national settings as well.” The program office and website have displayed “I Stand with Undocumented Students, Staff & Their Families” signs since 2017 and the Program Director is a university-trained UndocuAlly. It supports the university as a signatory of the amicus brief filed to challenge the rescission of DACA. The program recognizes that such support must not remain symbolic or ring hollow; it seeks to create a program culture and a classroom environment where no one is threatened or tokenized. It seeks to challenge and provoke students on controversial topics. It wants to students to examine their position in the world as well as the
privilege through which many of them experience it. IAFS has further adapted its course offerings to remain connected to contemporary issues. It now provides classes on Radical Nationalism (IAFS 3630) and Migration and Refugees (a section of IAFS 4500), to take just two examples. More courses on the Middle East and Africa (the program recognizes the problems associated with that the geographic clustering of these diverse regions) are needed. The joint hire with Women and Gender Studies, Assistant Professor Robert Wyrod, and the recent introduction of a historian of Africa, Associate Professor Myles Osborne, to the IAFS Faculty Committee are intended to address that concern.

IAFS promotes CU’s Global Seminars as additional campus resources for student exposure to different cultures. The Program Director facilitates a three-week course in Bordeaux. Other popular Global Seminars include the Conservation & Indigenous Peoples seminar in Tanzania, Democracy & Development seminar in Bolivia, Prague: Past & Present, and the Russian Language & Culture program in St. Petersburg. A new Global Seminar on War & Morality in Budapest seems especially promising for IAFS majors. IAFS has significantly increased its undergraduate certificate offerings to further partner with other academic resources on campus. Global Public Health, International Media, and Peace, Conflict, and Security Studies are particularly helpful in contributing toward a better understanding of inclusive excellence. The also encourages student attendance at the many relevant talks on race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and inclusion across campus through the promotion of events held by the Cultural Events Board, the Department of History, and Women & Gender Studies, to name a few.

The 2019-20 Faculty Committee is comprised of 12 men and 7 women. Of the five jointly-rostered tenure-line faculty, three are women and one is a female Asian scholar. Advertisements for recent faculty positions have been sent out to a wide number of sites to attract a diverse set of international candidates. In future hiring, IAFS might partner with a cognate department and the provost and Office of Faculty Affairs to use the Strategic, Targeted, and Accelerated Recruitment program (STAR) to recruit a scholar focused on improving diversity and inclusive excellence. The faculty ought to continue thinking about inclusive excellence through a close reading of the Inclusion, Diversity and Excellence in Academics (IDEA) plan released by the university as this self-study neared completion and through annual attendance at Diversity & Inclusion Summit hosted each November by the Office of Diversity, Equity & Community Engagement.